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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the Silver Hills (Idaho) Junior High School Talent Pool, a program designed to advance thinking skills through enrichment activities. The Talent Pool concept was established as an alternate means of identifying students eligible for gifted/talented services and programs. Students participate in three levels of enrichment activities, with efforts culminating in an independent project under the direction of the classroom teacher or the gifted/talented facilitator. Program goals are specified and the needs on which the program was based are pointed out (including the fact that there were students needing enrichment activities who were unable to meet eligibility criteria for participation in the gifted/talented program as set forth by the State Department of Education). General activities of the program are briefly described, such as the implementation of enrichment mini-courses based on identified student interest. (CL)

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DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

The Oliver Hills Junior High School Talent Pool was formed in order to include more students in enrichment activities. All students in the Talent Pool are to be involved in a wide range of Type I (See explanation below) and Type II (See explanation below) activities. Through these types of enrichment experiences, many students in the Talent Pool are expected to be interested in working on Type III (See explanation below) enrichment activities. One of the major purposes of Type I and Type II activities is to develop advanced thinking skills and to stimulate new interests in the students.

If a student develops an interest, he/she is expected to be revolved into advanced level enrichment experiences (Type III). These activities might be individual projects or small group activities. Participation in a Type III activity will be based on the student displaying an interest and a willingness to pursue that interest at an advanced level.

Students working on Type III enrichment activities are expected to spend several hours per week working under the direction of the classroom teacher and/or the G/T Facilitator. They are to continue work on the project until it has been completed, or has reached a realistic stopping point. The period of time involved may range from several weeks to several months. Upon completion those students are revolved out of the advanced level enrichment activities to make room for other students to revolve in

The time involved in the Talent Pool activities is not expected to result in the students missing essential regular classroom work. That work will be compacted to allow the student time to participate in the Talent Pool activities.

Type I Enrichment

Type I Enrichment consists of experiences and activities that are designed to bring the learner in touch with the kinds of topics or areas of study in which he or she may develop a sincere interest. Through involvement in Type I experiences, students will be in a better position to decide if they would like to do further research on a particular problem or area of interest.

Type II Enrichment

Type II Enrichment consists of materials, methods and instructional techniques that are concerned with the development of higher-level thinking and feeling processes. These processes include critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry training, divergent thinking, awareness development and creative

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or productive thinking. Type II activities are open-ended and allow students to escalate their thinking processes to the highest level possible. Type II activities are also designed to introduce students to more advanced kinds of studies.

Type III Enrichment

Type III Enrichment consists of activities in which the student becomes an actual investigator of a real problem or topic by using appropriate methods of inquiry. The success of a Type III activity depends on the interest and total commitment of the individual student. Examples of intensive, long-range Type III activities include: the creation of a walking robot; the production of a dramatic marionette show which outlines the development of clowns from the thirteenth century to the present; a continuation of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings in the form of a novel; the writing and illustration of a Children's Christmas Book; etc.

The Silver Hills Junior High School Talent Pool Program offers an alternative to the Idaho Administrative Rules and Regulations for Special Education criteria for the identification of gifted/talented students. At grade levels other than 7, 8, and 9, identification of gifted/talented students is based on the criteria established by these rules and regulations. At grades 7, 8, and 9 these same criteria are used for identification of those students eligible for being <u>funded</u> as gifted/talented students. In order to meet needs that will be discussed later, the Talent Pool concept was established as an alternate means of identifying students eligible for services and programs from the Gifted/Talented Facilitator. Major differences between the State Department eligibility criteria and the Talent Pool criteria are:

1. The SDE criteria includes intelligence as a consideration, Talent Pool does not.

2. The SDE academic criterion is 98th percentile or better, while the Talent Pool criterion requires "above average ability" (95th percentile).

3. The Talent Pool requires the student to self-nominate as an evidence motivation, while motivation is not a factor in the SDE considerations.

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4. The SDE criteria are designed to identify approximately 2% of the total school population, while the Talent Pool criteria are designed to identify up to 20% of the same population.

The Talent Pool Program at Silver Hills Junior High also establishes curriculum on participant interest resulting from brainstorming and interest inventories. This is different than the more traditional approach of gifted/talented curriculum being established by a Child Study Team composed primarily of adults.

Finally, the Talent Pool serves a larger population of students on a time available/interest basis, rather than a time specified by a Child Study Team. That is, students in Talent Pool participate in enrichment activities made available that fit first their interest area, and second, time that can be made available from the regular classroom.

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PROGRAM GOALS

The goals as established by the Gifted/Talented Facilitator, the Director of Special Education, and the Principal of Silver Hills Junior High School, prior to the onset of the program were to:

1. Identify students needing enrichment but who may not meet (SDE) gifted/talented criteria.

2. Provide a range of enrichment activities at Silver Hills Junior High.

3. Provide a larger "peer group" for (SDE) identified gifted/talented students.

There are numerous other reasons (goals) for establishing a Talent Pool (Revolving Door) model. These additional reasons are well stated in the philosophy put forth by Dr. Renzuli, originator of the Revolving Door model. The above described goals were based needs identified at Silver Hills Junior High School.

The initial needs were identified by the Gifted/Talented Facilitator, Building Principal, and Guidance Counselor at Silver Hills Junior High School. Needs were based on informal and anecdotal input from teachers, students, and parents. Those needs were:

1. There were students needing enrichment activities but who were unable to meet eligibility criteria for participation in the Gifted/Talented Program, as set forth by the State Department of Education.

2. Prior to the Talent Pool program one point three percent (1.3%) of the Silver Hills population was eligible for the Gifted/Talented Program. Such a small population provided little justification for a large range of enrichment activities.

3. The above mentioned small population also provided little peer group for activities that required group participation.

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GENERAL ACTIVITIES

I. Establish "Talent Pool"

Criteria:

1. Overall GPA 3.0
2. Self nomination
3. Teacher nomination
4. SRA or other achievement test or IQ score 95th percentile +.

Students must meet all four (4) criteria to become members of the Talent Pool. It is expected approximately 20% of the Silver Hills population will meet these criteria. This is based on 75 members of the Prospectors Club (where a 3.0 GPA is required) of 382 total students.

II. Interests Assessment

Following Talent Pool identification students will complete an enrichment interest survey.

III. Implementation of Enrichment Mini-Courses

Information from the interest survey will be used by the Facilitator to determine:

1. Student needs.
2. Develop up to nine 9-week mini-courses per year.
3. Match students from Talent Pool to mini-courses.

IV. Participation in the mini-courses is optional and non-graded. Mini-courses will pull students from regularly scheduled classes twice weekly per mini-course. Mini-courses will be 9 weeks in length. Highly motivated students can apply to continue their study via a contract with the mentor/instructor/facilitator, if space is available during a subsequent 9 weeks. Otherwise students will return to their regularly scheduled class upon completion of the mini-course they have selected.

The Talent Pool Program will serve approximately 6% of the total Silver Hills population during each 9 week quarter, or approximately 30% of the Talent Pool per quarter (This compares with 5 students or 1.3% currently (SDE) identified G/T students who are served in a self-contained G/T Program.) The first quarter of each year will be spent identifying the Talent Pool, assessing interest, and developing mini-courses. Mini-courses will be available for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters. It will be possible to provide an enrichment for nearly every member of the Talent Pool during the academic year. It is doubtful that all members of the Talent Pool will elect to take mini-courses. It is expected that only highly motivated students,

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capable of maintaining their regular studies in addition to enrichment work, will participate.

If needed, 2 periods per day may be scheduled for mini-courses. In discussing this plan with Gail Leetch, she felt that the scheduling problems could be easily solved because every effort would be made to pull students from their strongest subject.

For students who meet the state criteria for identification as gifted/talented, Child Study Team Meetings will be held to determine their programs.

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